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James's Revisions of the Style of THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

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MUCH LIKE DENCOMBE, the novelist in "The Middle Years," Henry James was in his own way "a passionate corrector, a fingerer of style," a writer who could never arrive at "a form final for himself," which meant that his novels inevitably lent themselves to continual revision. Broadly speaking, James's revisions were oriented in two directions: he wanted to correct his style, as such, and he wanted to intensify the symbolic texture of his language for the purposes of thematic motivation. Concentrating mainly on the matter of style, I shall discuss some representative passages in James's early and late revisions of *The Portrait of a Lady* with the object of illustrating two generalizations. First, that there is as much similarity as there is difference between James's early and late revisions; and second, that far from complicating the style of his early works, James's late revisions show him making a consistent effort to gain greater clarity and concreteness, and at times greater economy and a flavor of informality in his style—points which are variously confirmed by almost every recent study of James's revisions.¹

¹ For example, Royal A. Gettman found that in James's revision of *The American*, "The alterations in diction constantly were in the direction of the specific, the concrete and the explicit." Gettman also found the dialogue "at times more idiomatic" in the revision, and he saw the greatest stylistic improvement in the increase in figures of speech ("Henry James's Revision of *The American*," *American Literature*, XVI, 279, 282, Jan., 1945). As to greater conciseness, Lloyd M. Hoff, in his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "The Revision of *Roderick Hudson*" (Ohio State University, 1930), discovered that James "eliminated nearly one thousand five hundred words while he . . . expanded only a few over two hundred" (p. 504). The following are some of the other analyses which come to the same general conclusions about James's revisions: Isadore Traschen, "Henry James, The Art of Revision: A Comparison of the Original and Revised Version of *The American*" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1952); B. R. McElderry, Jr., "Henry James's Revision of *Watch and Ward*," *Modern Language Notes*, LXVII, 457-461 (Nov., 1952); Raymond D. Havens, "The Revisions of *Roderick Hudson*," *PMLA*, XL, 433-434 (June, 1925); Albert F. Gegenheimer, "Early and Late Revisions In Henry James's 'A Passionate Pilgrim,'" *American Literature*, XXIII, 233-242 (May, 1951).

F. O. Matthiessen made a perceptive analysis of James's revisions of *The Portrait*, particularly with respect to imagery, but he completely dismissed the first revision of the novel. Malcolm Cowley, on the other hand, has claimed that James's revisions "merely complicated the style" of the novel and that the incursions of the late style in the early work were generally damaging.² My study goes beyond Matthiessen's and contests the validity of Cowley's view.

The Portrait of a Lady was first published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, where it ran for fourteen months, from October, 1880, to November, 1881, and "simultaneously"—but a month behind *Macmillan's*—it was serialized in the *Atlantic Monthly*. On November 8, 1881, the first British edition, in three volumes, was published by Macmillan. Between magazine and book publication James gave the novel a careful, but limited, revision. He used this revised text for all subsequent printings of the novel up to the time of the New York Edition, for which he did an extensive job of revision.³

I

The first revision of *The Portrait* was exceedingly fine and close, but it brought about no changes in the themes or in the essential structure of the novel. Somewhat fewer than 200 passages were touched, and no single revised passage exceeds two sentences. At this point James was mainly interested in sifting his style to adjust the expression of individual thoughts. Occasionally he would try to exploit their broader implications. Accordingly, in the first revision we may observe James's stylistic decisions in a relatively pure state.

In a majority of cases we find James replacing a detached, general reference—which might give an idea more gravity than it needs—with a particular one. Instead of Isabel Archer's wanting Ralph Touchett to understand that she wished "to see as many specimens as possible, and specimens of everything" (*Mc*, XLIII, 10); "she wished

² F. O. Matthiessen, "The Painter's Sponge and Varnish Bottle," *The American Bookman*, I, 49-68 (Winter, 1944). This article also appears as an appendix to *Henry James: The Major Phase* (New York, 1944), pp. 152-186. Malcolm Cowley, "The Two Henry Jameses," *New Republic*, CXII, 178 (Feb. 5, 1945).

³ The first American edition, in one volume, appeared on Nov. 16, 1881. In the following year, the plates of the American edition were used to print another English edition, which might nominally be called the second British edition. The third British edition was published in 1883, in three volumes.

to see English society illustrated by figures" (1*B*, I, 80).⁴ Most of the first revision is applied on just such a small scale as this. However, the changes are very suggestive, for "figures," here is in line with the pointedly aesthetic terms James used throughout the novel and introduced so abundantly in the New York revision. A similar substitution, for both particularity and aesthetic tone, occurs when Ralph says to himself that Isabel's admirers "were not rivals of his and were perfectly welcome to act out their genius" (1*B*, I, 160). "Genius" had formerly been "their peculiar temperaments" (*Mc*, XLIII, 99). When Ralph came to Rome to see for himself what marriage had done to Isabel, he saw that "the free, keen girl had become another person" (1*B*, II, 244), which removes the abstraction and alliteration of the original: "the free, keen girl had suffered a marked mutation" (*Mc*, XLIV, 102). As Ralph observes the strain and the restlessness of her actions, James changes the general allusion to "her proceedings" to the more apt and particular "experiments" (*ibid.*); in her European adventures, Isabel Archer, quite literally, takes on the role of an experimenter in life. Her most striking "experiment," her marriage to Gilbert Osmond, was a shocking mistake, the impact of which she could not permit Ralph to see. However, he notices, "There was something fixed and mechanical in the severity painted upon [her face]." In the magazines this was not "an expression . . . it was an invention" (*Mc*, XLIV, 101). The first British edition continues the metaphor of the painted mask and calls it more appropriately a "representation" (1*B*, II, 243). There is irony in Isabel's using art to mask her deep dissatisfaction. She had wanted to emulate Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond, only to discover eventually that theirs was an art of appearances only. Isabel's "representation" is therefore the sort of thing she would most likely display under Osmond's captious eye—only at this time she uses it for her protection.

In many instances like these what seems a simple adjustment in meaning has a clarifying effect which goes beyond the individual passage in question and embraces basic matters of theme and structure. In the New York revision James carefully changed his

⁴To mark the various texts, I use *Mc* in reference to *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1*B* for the first British edition, 3*B* for the third British edition, and *N* for the New York Edition. In my collation of the first revision I compared the first two of these texts, and the second two for the late revision.

phrasing in innumerable places to get just those words which would carry the greatest thematic suggestiveness. For example, Gilbert Osmond likes to reduce people to small, smooth objects of art so he can better take possession of them and use them, without the inconvenience of getting his will involved with theirs. In one New York revision Isabel becomes "as smooth to [Osmond's] general need of her as handled ivory to the palm" (*N*, II, 11); originally, James had the cliché, "as bright and soft as an April cloud" (*3B*, II, 115). In another revision, referring to Madame Merle, James remarks that Osmond "seldom consented to finger, in talk, this roundest and smoothest bead of their social rosary" (*3B*, III, 5; *N*, II, 158). On the other hand, once the Countess Gemini has sprung her big revelation, Isabel in a revision sees herself as "an applied handled hung-up tool, as senseless and convenient as mere shaped wood and iron" (*N*, II, 379). James rarely went as far as this in his first revision, but on a smaller scale his sensitivity to connotations was just as acute. With her revelation, the Countess Gemini "had expected to kindle a conflagration and . . . had barely extracted a flash [from Isabel]." In the first revision by making the "flash" specifically a "spark," James gets a more explicit figurative reference to the new knowledge Isabel acquired, and in addition, he carries out the hyperbolic contrast between the great response the Countess had expected and the meager one she thought she got (*Mc*, XLIV, 411; *1B*, III, 185). This type of revision, in which James was interested in maintaining connotative clarity, is nicely illustrated with certain early revisions having to do with Madame Merle. To keep up the appearance of blamelessness was the chief of Madame Merle's values. So James deleted several attributions of morality to Madame Merle and supplied terms that better fitted her ideals. The Countess had been saying that Madame Merle and Osmond had always been bound to one another "even after she became virtuous." "Virtuous" becomes "proper" in revision (*Mc*, XLIV, 413; *1B*, III, 190).

In her relationship with Osmond, Madame Merle had finally "lost her pluck," and instead of seeing before her "the phantom of shame," she saw "the phantom of exposure" (*Mc*, XLIV, 416; *1B*, III, 196). James avoided a similarly wrong innuendo by calling Madame Merle "a brilliant fugitive from Brooklyn," rather than

"a brilliant fugitive from a sterner social order" (*Mc*, XLIII, 251; *1B*, I, 245). In the New York revision this was changed to "a perverted product of their common soil" (*N*, I, 271).

James added several urgent phrases to Madame Merle's accusation that Isabel had selfish motives in not pressing Lord Warburton to marry Pansy.

"If Lord Warburton simply got tired of the poor child, that's one thing; it's a pity. If he gave her up to please you it's another. That's a pity too; but in a different way. Then, in the latter case,

<p>you would perhaps make an attempt to find your pleasure in a new appeal to your friend." (<i>Mc</i>, XLIV, 336)</p>	<p>you would perhaps resign yourself to not being pleased—to simply seeing your step-daughter married. Let him off—let us have him!" (<i>1B</i>, III, 151)</p>
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This climaxes the tense scene which provokes Isabel's stunned "Who are you—what are you? . . . What have you to do with my husband?"

Some changes relating to Caspar Goodwood show a similar desire for connotative precision and thematic clarity. Most of these occur in Chapter XIII as Isabel, determined to reject Warburton, must turn quickly to parry Goodwood's appeal. "There was something too sensible, something oppressive and restrictive in the manner in which he presented himself" (*Mc*, XLIII, 93). In the revision James changed "sensible" to "forcible," which is more nearly parallel with "oppressive" and "restrictive" (*1B*, I, 146). In another sentence he changed "strength" to the more active "energy," and "firm" to "strong" (*Mc*, XLIII, 93; *1B*, I, 147). Among a host of changes dealing with Goodwood, James changed this passage yet again for the New York Edition, making the description sharper, more specific, and more suggestive.⁵ Somewhat anticipating this

⁵ "There was something too forcible, something oppressive and restrictive, in the manner in which he presented himself. She had been haunted at moments by the image of his disapproval. . . . Caspar Goodwood gave her an impression of energy." (*3B*, I, 130 f.)

"There was a disagreeably strong push, a kind of hardness of presence, in his way of rising before her. She had been haunted at moments by the image, by the danger of his disapproval. . . . Caspar Goodwood expressed for her an energy—and she had already felt it as a power—that was of his very nature. It was in no degree a matter of his "advantages"—it was a matter of the spirit that sat in his clear-burning eyes like some tireless watcher at a window." (*N*, I, 162).

type of late revision is the following passage in which with a few incisive strokes James more vividly puts across Caspar's awesome and irresistible strength.

To attempt to spare his sensibility or make her opposition oblique, as one might do with men smaller and superficially more irritable—this, in dealing with Caspar Goodwood, who would take everything of every sort that one might give him, was superfluous diplomacy. (*Mc*, XLIII, 171 f.)

To attempt to spare his sensibility or to escape from him edgewise, as one might do from a man who had barred the way less sturdily—this, in dealing with Caspar Goodwood, who would take everything that one might give him, was wasted agility. (*1B*, I, 199)

In the majority of cases James's early revisions involve details of wording that improve the prose of specific passages without ramifying their meaning for a more comprehensive or symbolic effect. The following are illustrative of passages where there is a gain in compression and precision, and in a general smoothness of expression. In the first three revisions the nouns and adjectives have too general a reference for the context, and so the broad, ambiguous sweep of the original passages is appropriately reduced.

Madame Merle had rid herself of every remnant of that wildness and acidity which we may assume to have belonged even to the most amiable persons in ages where social friction lasted less long among mankind than it has today. (*Mc*, XLIII, 252)

Madame Merle had rid herself of every remnant of that tonic wildness which we may assume to have belonged even to the most amiable persons in the ages before country-house life was the fashion. (*1B*, I, 248)

... ambitions reaching beyond the copious honours of Lord Warburton's petition. (*Mc*, XLIII, 93)

... ambitions reaching beyond Lord Warburton's handsome offer. (*1B*, I, 146)

... he lost nothing, in truth, by this inconsistency of vision. (*Mc*, XLIII, 425)

... he lost nothing, in truth, by these wandering glances. (*1B*, I, 55)

Pansy will tell you nothing that will feed your resentment. (*Mc*, XLIV, 335)

Pansy will tell you nothing that will make you more angry. (*1B*, III, 148)

. . . who was often very liberal in her expression of esteem. (*Mc*, XLIII, 17) . . . who often praised profusely. (*1B*, I, 95)

These two had it, as the phrase is, their own way. (*Mc*, XLIII, 341) These two had it their own way. (*1B*, II, 54)

. . . whose offered assistance the young lady from Albany . . . had suffered her to perceive that she deemed obstructive. (*Mc*, XLIII, 181) . . . whose offered assistance the young lady from Albany . . . had perhaps made too light of. (*1B*, I, 221)

In many instances, James's early revisions improve a passage by introducing a more figurative or more colloquial diction, two chief features of the later revision. In the following passage he alters the original to continue a metaphor, and with it, he incorporates a specific reference to the battle of the sexes—the marriage proposal is at the center of action in the novel. It is interesting in connection with the mention of "artillery" that the New York revision should depict Goodwood as a knight in armor.

Of course the danger of a high spirit is the danger of inconsistency—the danger of keeping up the flag after the place has been surrendered; a sort of behavior so anomalous as to be almost a dishonour to the flag. But Isabel who knew nothing of the forces that life might bring against her. . . . (*Mc*, XLIII, 2) But Isabel who knew little of the sorts of artillery to which young ladies are exposed. . . . (*1B*, I, 62)

James more sensitively renders the manner in which Isabel would recognize that she had fallen in love.

Deep in her soul—it was the deepest thing there—lay a belief that if a certain impulse could be stirred, she could give herself completely, but the image . . . was too formidable to be attractive. (*Mc*, XLIII, 3) Deep in her soul—it was the deepest thing there—lay a belief that if a certain light should dawn, she could give herself completely, but the image . . . was too formidable to be attractive. (*1B*, I, 65)

If he was going to call it an image, he had to genuinely make it one. Light as a symbol of knowledge figures quite elaborately in the novel. This seems a rather small matter, however, in com-

parison with the New York revision of a similar situation, where, with somewhat the same objective, James greatly enriched his description of Isabel's emotional dilation before the force of love. This occurs in two memorable passages towards the end of the novel, after Ralph Touchett has died. Isabel had gone to England to be with Ralph at the end, against Osmond's grave objections. Determined to return to Osmond, Isabel meets Caspar for the last time, and in the very act of rejecting him finally, she feels his sincerity very deeply and is pained with the knowledge that "she had never been loved before." In the original text James had written after this, "It wrapped her about; it lifted her off her feet" (*3B*, III, 222). In the revised text he wrote:

She had believed it, but this was different; this was the hot wind of the desert, at the approach of which the others dropped dead, like mere sweet airs of the garden. It wrapped her about; it lifted her off her feet, while the very taste of it, as of something potent, acrid and strange, forced open her set teeth. (*N*, II, 433 f.)

It is a bitter irony that Goodwood, of all people, should make Isabel see how deprived of feeling and love her life has been. With as vividly emotive a passage as he ever wrote, James elaborates the effects of Goodwood's kiss, so that all of the jarring, restrictive, and passionate qualities in Goodwood's nature are fused and reconciled. At first his kiss had been "like a flash of lighting; when it was dark again she was free" (*3B*, III, 224). This is the revision:

His kiss was like white lightning, a flash that spread, and spread again, and stayed; and it was extraordinarily as if, while she took it, she felt each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive fact of his face, his figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity and made one with this act of possession. So she had heard of those wrecked and under water following a train of images before they sink. But when darkness returned she was free. (*N*, II, 436)

When Isabel complains of Ralph's "laughing at all things, beginning with himself," Ralph explains that he simply keeps "a band in [his] ante room." Ralph uses the "band" to beguile a more serious attitude of which his amusement is the pathetic symptom. In the first revision, to preserve the metaphor and the quality of feeling it suggests, James has Isabel irritated, nevertheless, by the

“perpetual fiddling” (*1B*, I, 74) rather than by the abstract “barrier of sound” (*Mc*, XLIII, 7).

James also changed a number of metaphors to give them fuller meaning and greater point. When Isabel asks Ralph if he is proposing to her, Ralph replies:

“By no means. From the point of view I speak of that would be fatal; I should overturn my own porridge. What I mean is that I shall have the entertainment of seeing what a young lady does who won’t marry Lord Warburton.” (*Mc*, XLIII, 168)

“By no means. From the point of view I speak of that would be fatal; I should kill the goose that supplies me with golden eggs. I use that animal as a symbol of my insane illusions. What I mean is. . . .” (*1B*, I, 192)

Then, feeling deeply let down by Isabel’s marriage to Osmond, Ralph says:

“You seem to me to be soaring far up in the blue—to be sailing in the bright light, over the heads of men. Suddenly someone tosses up a stone . . . and down you drop to the ground.” (*Mc* XLIV, 19)

tosses up a faded rosebud . . . and down you drop to the ground.” (*1B*, II, 181)

Isabel had “as little contempt as admiration” for the Countess Gemini. “She would as soon have thought of despising her as of passing moral judgment on a grasshopper” (*1B*, III, 63). Originally, this had been a “cockatoo” (*Mc*, XLIV, 242). The Countess is, throughout the novel, referred to in bird metaphors. In keeping with the tone of Isabel’s attitude, James scales this down to the insect. As the reference shortly precedes the Countess’s revelation, James also deepens his dramatic irony.

When Lord Warburton visits Isabel in Rome she at first thinks him cured of his disappointment:

Time had laid its hand upon his heart and, without chilling this organ, had discreetly soothed it. (*Mc*, XLIV, 95)

Time had breathed upon his heart, and without chilling this organ, had freely ventilated it. (*1B*, II, 229)

The metaphor of the revision has more accurate meaning.

In the New York revision James made a very impressive number of changes to give his dialogue a more relaxed and colloquial

quality. From the following changes we can see that this tendency was well under way in the first revision.

"... if you were to proceed on that basis, you would find you had made a great mistake." (*Mc*, XLIII, 15 f.)

"... a man who knows you so little coming down on you such a thumping demand!" (*Mc*, XLIII, 88)

"Your mother has been less—less—less—what do you call it? less theoretic since I have been ill." (*Mc*, XLIII, 186)

"... they would have been of good use to me." (*Mc*, XLIII, 356)

"... he looked a gentlemanlike young fellow." (*Mc*, XLIV, 196)

"... if you were to proceed on that basis, you would be pulled up very short." (*1B*, I, 92)

"... a man who knows you so little coming down on you with such a thumper!" (*1B*, I, 136)

"Your mother has been less—less—less—what shall I call it? less out of the way since I have been ill." (*1B*, I, 232)

"... they would have been quite in my line." (*1B*, II, 85)

"... he looked a well-set-up young fellow." (*1B*, III, 56)

In keeping with the general effort to lighten his prose, James added a few humorous twists in his first revision. A somewhat formal reference to Henrietta Stackpole and Mr. Bantling as "frank allies" is given more humorous point when it is changed to "harmless confederates." This becomes more broadly funny in the New York reading: "groping celibates" (*Mc*, XLIII, 268; *1B*, II, 16; *N*, I, 312). Instead of the Countess Gemini's husband's having been in England "a good deal," he "goes in, according to his poor light, for everything English" (*Mc*, XLIII, 346; *1B*, II, 64)—the Italianate Englishman in reverse.

II

The major difference between the first revision of *The Portrait of a Lady* and the New York revision is largely a matter of the scale on which James pursued the same general stylistic criteria. In the late revision he did a much more extensive job; not only did he sharpen his prose in particular spots, as we have seen him doing in the first revision, but he took great pains to heighten his thematic structure as well, making his symbolism richer and more incisive. Space does not permit me to do more than briefly scan one area in

which this took place, after which I shall indicate the continuity of those tendencies towards clarity, concreteness, and informality that I have traced in the first revision.

Much of the thematic import of the novel revolves around the conception of life as a subject for aesthetic endeavor. It is overtly mentioned in only a few instances, but there is a sort of shared recognition, especially among the "Europeanized" characters, that the regular business of life can provide some rare aesthetic pleasures if one makes a conscious program of appreciating it in that way. With Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond, the aesthetic manner is a pose and a deception; with Isabel Archer it becomes a very integral thing, growing very naturally out of her keen moral sensitivity. She wants to *live*, in the sense that Lambert Strether in *The Ambassadors* regretted he hadn't; she wants to find herself, and she is tremendously curious about the experienced civilization that confronts her in Europe. For her most genuine appreciator, Ralph Touchett, there is something very fresh and stimulating about Isabel, and he watches her development with the relish of a connoisseur. He hadn't known Isabel but a few days before he began to marvel to himself:

"A character like that . . . a real little passionate force to see at play is the finest thing in nature. It's finer than the finest work of art—than a Greek bas-relief, than a great Titian, than a Gothic cathedral. . . . The key of a beautiful edifice is thrust into my hand, and I'm told to walk in and admire." (*N*, I, 86)

For a more concrete effect, the phrase "a real little passionate force to see at play" was added in revision. This explains the supreme virtue of Isabel's nature and explicitly labels its distinguishing beauty.

Casual as it seems, Isabel's first appearance in the novel is as carefully staged as the entrance of the lead in a play. Mrs. Touchett's ambiguous telegrams have aroused the men's curiosity about the American niece she is bringing with her. The men have been talking about the great social and economic changes in the world and of Lord Warburton's desire to "take hold" of something. Ralph suggests it be a pretty woman, but Warburton fears they too may be "knocked sky-high." Mr. Touchett objects that they will be unaffected by social changes. Pretty women thus belong to

the realm of ideal and permanent things; with this lofty idea, James heralds the introduction of his heroine.

In line with the first revision, where we saw how patiently James concentrated on small clarifying details, are the minute—but meaningful—changes he made in the New York revision of Isabel's entrance. Instead of her appearing "in the doorway of the dwelling," it is "in the ample doorway" (3*B*, I, 13; *N*, I, 16). Several details bring out what James wanted to accomplish here. Though highly significant, her entrance is not to be ostentatiously so; for the same reason the ample doorway has another value. It frames Isabel as a picture, but she is not yet a very imposing one, a portrait, say. She gets lost; she cannot fill out an ample frame. By cutting "of the dwelling" James keeps our attention on the doorway—that it is not considered part of the dwelling, for the moment, makes the doorway more of a frame. Amplitude also is the right idea for Gardencourt, in any respect.

We don't have to reach for subtleties in the next "framing" scene. The shy pastoral of the first entrance contrasts sharply with the deep colors of the *portrait* of Mrs. Osmond in Chapter xxxvii, replete this time with a gilded doorway for her frame. We move from the Fragonard to the Titian. We see Isabel for the first time since her marriage; more than three years have passed since we saw her last, and now a new person is brought forth. She is a woman. We enter the Osmonds' rooms with Ned Rosier, collector and appreciator of rare beauty. "Framed in the gilded doorway, she struck our young man as the picture of a gracious lady." As this is very obviously his title piece, James burnishes the portrait with some rather lavish strokes.

She was dressed in black velvet; she looked brilliant and noble. We know what Mr. Rosier thought of her, and the terms in which, to Madame Merle, he had expressed his admiration.

She was dressed in black velvet; she looked high and splendid, as he had said, and yet, oh so radiantly gentle! We know. . . .

Like his appreciation of her dear little step-daughter, it was based partly on his fine sense of the plastic; but also on a relish for a

Like his appreciation of her dear little step-daughter, it was based partly on his eye for decorative character, his instinct for authenti-

more impalpable sort of merit—that merit of a bright spirit, which Rosier's devotion to brittle wares had not made him cease to regard as a quality. (3*B*, II, 191)

city; but also on a sense for uncatalogued values, for that secret of a "lustre" beyond any recorded losing or rediscovering, which his devotion to brittle wares had still not disqualified him to recognize. (*N*, II, 105)

Earlier, having seen much of the culture of Europe, Isabel awaits Caspar Goodwood, feeling "older—ever so much, and as if she were 'worth more' for it, like some curious piece in an antiquary's collection." The fact that she should look upon herself as a collector's piece has its ironic parallel in Gilbert Osmond's appreciation of her. None of this is conveyed by the plain passage in the original text—"... as she felt a good deal older than she had done a year before, it is probable that to a certain extent she looked so" (3*B*, II, 142; *N*, II, 42). In addition, whereas she was in the original text "very simply dressed," in revision "she walked in no small shimmering splendour."

But in the end, on the train, as she goes to Ralph's deathbed, Isabel Archer, the once grand portrait of a lady, though still very fine, is reduced in her misery to the figure on an ancient burial urn. In the revised text

She sat in her corner, so motionless, so passive, . . . so detached from hope and regret, that she recalled to herself one of those Etruscan figures couched upon the receptacle of their ashes. (*N*, II, 391)

During their courtship, Isabel succeeds in moving Osmond out from behind the curtain of boredom he had hung about himself. Osmond is surprised to find that he is enjoying the game that Madame Merle has put him up to. He is charmed by Isabel's spontaneous grace, though he is hardly aware, then, or really at any time, of its full potentiality. As Isabel prepares to leave Rome to travel—perhaps around the world—Osmond says to her, "Don't you remember my telling you that one ought to make one's life a work of art? You looked rather shocked at first; but then I told you that it was exactly what you seemed to me to be trying to do with your own" (*N*, II, 15). With the emphasis placed on good and bad art in the dialogue following these remarks, we get an intimation that Isabel and Osmond have somewhat different

ideas of what constitutes artistic living. The adjectives "stupid" and "clear" in the revision refer the discussion more precisely to life as the artistic medium. Isabel fears her travel plans will strike Osmond as rather whimsical.

"What you despise most in the world is bad art."

"Possibly. But yours seems to me very good." (*3B*, II, 121)

"What you despise most in the world is bad, is stupid art."

"Possibly. But yours seems to me very clear and very good." (*N*, II, 15)

Isabel's modest remark contains a revealing truth; strictly understood, it is a commentary on Osmond's taste to say he prizes the antithesis of stupid art—i.e., clever art.

Some of the most suggestive revisions which bear on the theme of making a work of art of life reveal how conscientious James was about gaining precision and concreteness. He greatly clarified the aestheticism of Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond, showing how it is mingled with a lurking evil, which in fact seems to grow out of their very hyperaestheticism. Hence, James made numerous changes in his characterizations of Madame Merle and Osmond to point up the pejorative emphasis. For example,

[Osmond] had consulted his taste in everything—his taste alone, perhaps; that was what made him so "different from every one else. (*3B*, II, 66)

[Osmond] had consulted his taste in everything—his taste alone perhaps, as a sick man consciously incurable consults at last only his lawyer: that was what made him so different from every one else. (*N*, I, 377)

The revision sets up a vital contrast, for James goes on to point out that "Ralph had something of this quality, this appearance of thinking life a matter of connoisseurship; but in Ralph it was an anomaly, a kind of humorous excrescence, whereas in Mr. Osmond it was the key-note, and everything was in harmony with it."

In a passage in which Osmond describes the effect of Italy on one's character, James's revisions have Osmond expose his faults, only apparently unintentionally, in as open a piece of auto-analysis as James ever permits a character to make. Living in Italy, Osmond observes, has numerous drawbacks:

. . . strangers were too apt to see such a world as all romantic. It met the case soothingly for the human, for the social failure—by which he meant the people who couldn't "realize," as they said, on their sensibility: they could keep it about them there, in their poverty, without ridicule, as you might keep an heirloom or an inconvenient entailed place that brought you in nothing. Thus there were advantages in living in the country which contained the greatest sum of beauty. (*N*, I, 370 f.)

Osmond is precisely the human and social failure, who, in addition, cannot cash in on his sensibility. Actually, his tastes are of a sort that preclude wide socialization, in substitution for which he does wear his sensibility as one might an heirloom. His sensibility is passive and narcissistic. Of all this, there is next to nothing in the original.⁶

All along, the conditioning context in which James places the various manifestations of Living Art is implicitly critical of them; that is, with the singular exception of Isabel's art. By a subtle association Living Art even becomes symbolically linked with the mysterious and evil. When Isabel went to the convent to visit Pansy before leaving for England, she unexpectedly found herself confronted with Madame Merle:

The effect was strange, for Madame Merle was already so present to her vision that her appearance in the flesh was a sort of reduplication. (*3B*, III, 175) was like suddenly, and rather awfully, seeing a painted picture move. (*N*, II, 375)

Quite important is the way James rewrote Isabel's first encounter with Gilbert Osmond to extract from that situation the full ironic implications of artistic living. One notices especially the double meanings of the charity performance by professionals and of Isabel's having enjoyed the performance as if she had paid a big sum for her seat. The original text contains none of this.

[Isabel] sat there as an impartial auditor of their brilliant discourse. Mrs. Touchett was not present, and these two had their own way. They	[Isabel] sat there as if she had been at the play and had paid even a large sum for her place. Mrs. Touchett was not present, and these
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* ". . . strangers were too apt to see Italy in rose-colour. On the whole it was better than other countries, if one was content to lead a quiet life and take things as they came. It was very dull sometimes, but there were advantages in living in the country which contained the most beauty." (*3B*, II, 61 f.)

talked extremely well; it struck Isabel almost as a dramatic entertainment, rehearsed in advance. Madame Merle referred everything to her, but the girl answered nothing. . . . (3*B*, II, 49)

two had it, for the effect of brilliancy, all their own way. They talked of the Florentine, the Roman, the cosmopolite world, and might have been distinguished performers figuring for a charity. It all had the rich readiness that would have come from rehearsal. Madame Merle appealed to her as if she had been on the stage, but she could ignore any learnt cue without spoiling the scene. . . . (*N*, I, 355)

It should be plain from this and other revisions that when a new passage is more elaborately written, James *says* more and his writing is richer. He is not just repeating the same idea in a more complicated way.

Although she is pretty thoroughly taken in, Isabel does at times seem able to discern that things are not entirely what they might seem. She picks up a few hints from Ralph, who tells her Osmond is "a vague, unexplained American" ["a mysterious American," 3*B*, II, 51], and may be a prince in disguise "who has abdicated in a fit of fastidiousness ["magnanimity," *ibid.*] and has been in a state of disgust ever since" (*N*, I, 358). Pressing for more information Isabel says,

"The more information one has about a person the better."

"I don't agree to that" [Ralph replies]. (3*B*, II, 52)

"The more information one has about one's dangers the better."

"I don't agree to that—it may make them dangers." (*N*, I, 359)

It may seem strange that Isabel should be the one to introduce the term "danger," but it is only in the very beginning and after it is too late that she becomes suspicious.

III

So much for the matter of thematic heightening. What James did for his themes is simply part of a more general effort, which he carried over from his first revision, to make his style explicit enough for the meaning it had to express. In the following lists

I have collected various examples of this tendency as it occurs in passages where James's intention in revising has been largely restricted to local expressions which have no great bearing on themes.

The largest percentage of stylistic changes in the New York revision improve the expression of an idea by the use of more particular and more precise words. In addition, many revised passages so improved have a more relevant meaning. In a number of cases the greater particularity takes the form of a metaphor, and various others illustrate greater directness and compactness.

The truth was that he had simply accepted the situation. (3*B*, I, 43)

His serenity was but the array of wild flowers niched in his ruin. (N, I, 54)

His face wore its pleasant perpetual smile, which perhaps suggested wit rather than achieved it. . . . (3*B*, II, 155)

Blighted and battered, but still responsive and still ironic, his face was like a lighted lantern patched with paper and unsteadily held. . . . (N, II, 59)

Isabel could have no illusions . . . as to the moderate character of her own triumphs. (3*B*, I, 36)

Isabel could have no illusions . . . as to the limits of her own power to frisk and jump and shriek—above all with rightness of effect. (N, I, 44)

. . . the stale September days, in the huge half-empty town, borrowed a charm from his circumstances. (3*B*, I, 159)

. . . the stale September days, in the huge half-empty town, had a charm wrapped in them as a coloured gem might be wrapped in a dusty cloth. (N, I, 197)

It was a fact, however, that it had always seemed to her that Caspar Goodwood, of all men, ought to enjoy the whole devotion of some tender woman. (3*B*, I, 182)

He oughtn't to stride about lean and hungry, however—she certainly felt *that* for him. (N, I, 224)

. . . it was absurd that a man so completely absolved from fidelity should stiffen himself in an attitude it would be more graceful to discontinue. (3*B*, II, 23)

. . . it was absurd that a man both so intelligent and so honourably dealt with should cultivate a scar out of proportion to any wound. (N, I, 323)

Often the precision and particularity are achieved through a bolder and more colorful metaphor, which carries greater characterizing force:

... the mistress of a house which presented a narrowness of new brown stone to Fifty-third Street [Isabel's sister, Lilian], had quite justified her claim to matrimony. (3*B*, I, 31)

"I have never felt like Isabel's sister, and I am sure I never shall," [Lilian] had said to an intimate friend; a declaration which made it all the more creditable that she had been prolific in sisterly offices. (3*B*, I, 31)

"For me, I could take the poor fellow very seriously. . . ." (3*B*, I, 80).

The instances in which a revision is written more smoothly and in a simpler, more relaxed syntax far outnumber those in which the opposite is true. The main evidence for this is to be found in such revisions as the following.

... her sister's words must have prompted a remark that she made to her husband in the conjugal chamber as the two were getting ready to go to the hotel. (3*B*, I, 32)

His composition was a mixture of good-humoured manly force and a modesty that at times was almost boyish; the sweet and wholesome savour of which . . . lost nothing from the addition of a tone of kindness which was not boyish, inasmuch as there was a good deal of reflection and of conscience in it. (3*B*, I, 79)

... the mistress of a wedge of brown stone violently driven into Fifty-third Street, seemed to exult in her condition as in a bold escape. (*N*, I, 38)

"I've never kept up with Isabel—it would have taken *all* my time," she had often remarked; in spite of which, however, she held her rather wistfully in sight; watching her as a motherly spaniel might watch a free greyhound. (*N*, I, 39)

"For me, in his place, I could be as solemn as a statue of Buddha." (*N*, I, 98)

... her sister's words had doubtless prompted a word spoken to her husband as the two were making ready for their visit. (*N*, I, 39)

His quality was a mixture of the effect of rich experience—oh, so easily come by!—with a modesty at times almost boyish; the sweet and wholesome savour of which . . . lost nothing from the addition of a tone of responsible kindness. (*N*, I, 97)

Isabel was not incapable of finding it agreeable to have an advantage of position. . . . (3*B*, I, 177)

Isabel was not incapable of tasting any advantage of position. . . . (*N*, I, 218)

This inquiry was a concession to curiosity, for she did not enjoy discussing the gentleman with Henrietta Stackpole, and she thought that in her treatment of the subject this faithful friend lacked delicacy. (3*B*, I, 111 f.)

It was a concession to her curiosity, for she disliked discussing the subject and found Henrietta wanting in delicacy. (*N*, I, 138)

And she turned round and showed a small, fair face, of which the natural and usual expression seemed to be a smile of perfect sweetness. (3*B*, II, 28)

And she turned round and showed a small, fair face painted with a fixed and intensely sweet smile. (*N*, I, 329)

. . . he regarded it on the whole with philosophic tolerance. (3*B*, II, 55)

. . . he made the best of it, as he had done of worse things. (*N*, I, 363)

The principal means James used to make his diction more informal was the introduction of contractions and colloquialisms. These occur mainly in dialogue and in indirect discourse. Of all the contractable combinations occurring in these places it would be a safe estimate to say that James contracted at least eighty per cent of them. The changes are so abundant that those occurring in one extended passage should suffice to suggest the general tendency. The following samples appear at the end of the Chapter 11 between pages 17 and 20 in the third British edition and pages 21 and 23 in the New York edition. They all occur in dialogue.

I have never seen any thing so beautiful.	>	I've
I have been through all that.	>	I've
But you are very beautiful	>	you're
There is nothing better	>	There's
I have got a very good one	>	I've
I will keep him while I am here	>	I'll . . . I'm
You are very kind	>	You're
I will settle it	>	I'll
I am glad to be here	>	I'm
if they are settled	>	they're

I have been there	>	I've
You have lately lost	>	You've
I am not a candidate	>	I'm

The following are some of the colloquialisms James inserted in revision.

. . . she was interested and excited.
(3*B*, I, 49)

. . . she was interested; she was, as she said to herself, floated. (*N*, I, 60)

Ralph sang its praises, on purpose, as she said, to torment her. . . . (3*B*, I, 67)

Ralph sang its praises on purpose, as she said, to work her up. . . . (*N*, I, 83)

. . . it appeared to her so strange that a nature in which she found so much to esteem should exhibit such extraordinary disparities. (3*B*, I, 97)

. . . it struck her as strange that a nature in which she found so much to esteem should break down so in spots. (*N*, I, 121)

. . . Lord Warburton's making love to her. . . . (3*B*, I, 115)

. . . Lord Warburton's "making up" to her. . . . (*N*, I, 143)

"You want to see life, as the young men say." (3*B*, I, 173)

"You want to see life—you'll be hanged if you don't, as the young men say." (*N*, I, 213)

"You appear to think I am attempting to deceive you." (3*B*, I, 181)

"Do you accuse me of lying to shake you off?" (*N*, I, 223)

"It is too large for me!" (3*B*, I, 185)

"It's a sight too big for *me*!" (*N*, I, 227)

"Oh, I have been very happy; don't imagine me to suggest for a moment that I have not." (3*B*, II, 71)

"Oh, I've made in my way a good thing of it. Don't imagine I'm whining about it." (*N*, I, 383)

". . . she is an insipid schoolgirl." (3*B*, II, 83)

". . . she's an insipid little chit." (*N*, I, 398)

"Ah, that's where she would stumble!" (3*B*, III, 172)

"Ah, that's where she'd dish herself!" (*N*, II, 370)

IV

Perhaps the most striking feature of James's late revisions is that they show him striving for lucidity and directness of expression at the time when his other writing exhibited an equally consistent tendency towards complexity and abstruseness. However, the contrast does not fully indicate the relationship between his revisions and his late style. For one thing, it is obviously more in their subjects and in the mode of thought and structure they required rather than in their style alone that the late novels are to be distinguished from the kind of work James put into his revisions. Purely at the level of stylistic analysis, in addition to the differences, there are also some basic similarities between the two styles.

The common defense of James's style in his late novels is that he had to create a very intricate prose for them because he wanted to deal specifically and faithfully with those elements of human consciousness about which we do not ordinarily expect fully accurate statements. In revisions no less than in his late novels James frequently relied upon metaphors to render accurately the full subtlety and richness of his thought. For example, in the revised description of Madame Merle and Osmond putting on a charity performance for Isabel and in the revision of Goodwood's kiss James expands the original passages with a series of metaphors which develop new points of view and thus enlarge the scope of his meaning. On this basis, either passage could be very favorably compared with similar ones in any of the late novels.

Despite certain overt differences, both the revisions and the late style reflect an effort to achieve the condition of precision which for a perfectionist like James makes questions of relative complexity a secondary consideration. James simply adjusted his tactics to the conditions at hand and he showed that he could succeed at various levels in achieving objectives inspired by a common ideal of functional prose.

The similarities between the late style and the late revisions, along with the stylistic similarities between James's early and late revisions, suggest a fundamental continuity in his development which becomes obscured by the tendency to group his work in periods. On the other hand, to the degree that it also differs from

the style of the late novels, James's style in revising *The Portrait of a Lady* should qualify somewhat the notion that in his late period his prose became uniformly and almost obstinately involved. From either viewpoint, the revisions demonstrate that James was capable of a measure of flexibility in style which has been too rarely appreciated.